

**IDAHO ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO
THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS
MEETING MINUTES**

April 27, 2017

The Idaho Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Committee) convened a conference call to discuss the contents and vote on the report focused on public school spending and continue discussions on project topics. Marshall Mend chaired the meeting. The meeting was open to the public and took place from 1:00 PM to 1:48 PM MT.

State Advisory Committee Members:

Present:

- Marshall Mend
- Scott Yenor
- Richard Cummings
- Dina Flores-Brewer
- Margie Gonzalez
- Shaakirah Sanders
- Rudolph Wilson
- Paulette Jordan

Absent:

- Michael Riley
- Stephan Smith
- Dilshani Sarathchandra
- Peter Optekar
- Patricia Carter-Goodheart

Commission Staff present:

- Ana Victoria Fortes (Designated Federal Officer, DFO)
- David Mussatt
- Angelica Trevino
- David Barreras

Members of the Public present:

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Meeting Notes/Decisions Made:

I. Welcome

II. Approval of February 8, 2017 Meeting Minutes

- Chair did not ask Committee to confirm minutes

III. Review of Idaho Report on Equity on Public School Spending –

The focus of the ID Committee report is to examine equity in public education spending with an emphasis on disparities of race and ethnic background of students. Of concern to the Committee was whether per-child spending by school districts with high percentages of low-income minority students is lower than spending on more-advantaged white children in Idaho. To examine this question, the Committee elected to take on a quantitative approach to answer this question by conducting statistical analysis using public data.

Findings

Finding 1. The Idaho State Constitution declares that: “It shall be the duty of the legislature of Idaho to establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools.” The Idaho Advisory Committee has severe reservations this obligation is being met.

Finding 2. Children who are English Language Learner (ELL) students are presently significantly disadvantaged under the state’s expenditure formula. This is the only social demographic group examined by the Committee that was disadvantaged.

Finding 3. School districts in rural areas of the state have significantly higher per child expenditures than school districts in urban settings. Rural districts necessarily incur higher per child transportation expenditures. District resources that must be allocated to transportation are resources that are necessarily unavailable for other learning expenditures, e.g., classroom instruction.

Finding 4. State level support to local school districts exhibits no disparity on the basis of poverty and ELL status. However, local school district that augments state education support shows a wide range of revenues. The Idaho Advisory Committee concludes that ELL children are likely concentrated in school districts where local support for educational support is substantially lower.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: As local education spending can significantly affect per child spending and that ELL children in the state are significantly disadvantaged under the present funding formula, the Idaho Advisory Committee recommends the state consider some type of “weighting” in its school funding formula similar to what is in place in other states, such as Arizona. This does not necessarily have to incur additional state-wide revenues, but could simply entail state-to-district adjustments in the current funding formula.

Recommendation 2: As the Idaho Committee found that rural school districts have significantly higher per child expenditures, the Idaho Advisory Committee recommends the state examine whether this is related to necessary transportation expenses. To the extent that school districts have obligated transportation costs, the Committee recommends that state consider some type of “weighting” in its school funding formula to account for transportation. Again, this does not necessarily have to incur additional state-wide revenues, but could simply entail adjustments to the current funding formula.

Subcommittee members Margie Gonzalez and Richard Cummings noted that they cannot accept the report as is and will work on revisions to make changes to the second finding and will include an additional recommendation to reflect that the Department of Education and State Legislature conduct a study related to expenditures in the state dedicated to ELL students.

Margie Gonzalez and Richard Cummings will send changes to Ana Fortes to circulate to the Committee and at the next Committee meeting, members will vote on the final report.

IV. Discussion of Civil Rights Issues in Idaho

- Shaakirah Sanders is interested in exploring access to mental health in the prison system
 - She notes that Idaho has a lack of mental health treatment options and many end up in the criminal justice system. Ada County jail is known to be the #1 treatment facility in the state for individuals with a mental illness.
 - Chair and Dina Flores-Brewer are interested in working with Shaakirah on this topic.
- Chair is interested in human rights issues in prisons.
- Paulette Jordan is interested in immigration reform.
 - Shaakirah Sanders would like to work on this issue as well.
- Committee members who are interested in exploring topics are encouraged to provide a short summary about the topic. A few items that would be helpful for background could be information on a state or federal law and how it may disproportionately affect members of a federally protected category.
 - If Committee members answer yes to the following questions, the US Commission on Civil Rights has jurisdiction to explore these topics:
 - Are there laws in the state that disproportionately impact specific federally protected communities? If so, which one?
 - Is there a denial of equal protection of the law?

- Is there reason for concern about specific communities' access to voting?

V. Public Comment

- No members of the public were on the line.

VI. Next meeting

- DFO will send out a Doodle Poll to the Committee.
- Richard Cummings and Margie Gonzalez will address edits on the report and will send to DFO.
- DFO will send out edited report to have addressed at next meeting.

VII. Adjournment

- Dina Flores-Brewer motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- Rudolph Wilson seconds the motion.